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GUIDE TO WORKPLACE HOUSEKEEPING

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PREFACE

This publication was prepared as a source of information for health and safety committees and others with an interest in understanding and reducing the occupational risks from poor workplace housekeeping.

SAFETY INFOGRAMs are available separately as training aids for the workplace.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Effective housekeeping can eliminate workplace hazards and help get a job done safely and properly. Poor housekeeping frequently promotes accidents by hiding hazards that cause illness and injury. If the sight of paper, debris and spills is accepted as normal, other more serious health and safety hazards may be taken for granted.

Housekeeping is not just cleanliness--it requires orderly conditions and the avoidance of congestion. It also requires attention to important details, such as the layout of the whole workplace, aisle marking, the adequacy of storage facilities, and maintenance. It is a basic part of accident and fire prevention.

Effective housekeeping is an ongoing operation, not a hit-and-miss clean-up done once in a while. Periodic "panic" clean-ups are costly and ineffective in reducing accidents.

This guide explains effective workplace housekeeping and how to apply it.

2. PURPOSE OF EFFECTIVE WORKPLACE HOUSEKEEPING

Effective housekeeping is a vital and often legally required part of a workplace health and safety program. Yet housekeeping is an often neglected part of workplace responsibilities.

Accidents commonly caused by poor housekeeping include:

- tripping over loose objects on floors, stairs and platforms
- being hit by falling objects
- slipping on greasy, wet or dirty surfaces
- striking against projecting, poorly stacked or misplaced material
- tearing the hands or other parts of the body on projecting nails, wire or steel strapping

To avoid these hazards a workplace must "maintain" housekeeping order throughout a workday. Although maintaining housekeeping order requires a great deal of management and planning, the benefits are many.

Effective housekeeping results in:

- reduced handling to ease the flow of materials
- clutter-free and spill-free work areas that reduce tripping and slipping accidents
- reduced fire hazards
- reduced worker exposures to hazardous substances
- better tool and material control

- more efficient equipment clean-up and maintenance
- better hygienic conditions leading to improved health
- improved use of space
- reduced property damage by improving preventive maintenance
- less janitorial work
- improved morale

3. PLANNING A HOUSEKEEPING PROGRAM

A good housekeeping program is the key to effective housekeeping. Often materials handled and stored in hazardous ways result from ineffective or insufficient storage planning. Knowing the layout and the movement of materials throughout the workplace can help plan work procedures. A good housekeeping program plans and manages the orderly storage and movement of materials from point of entry to exit. It includes a material flow plan to ensure minimal handling of materials. The plan also ensures that work areas are not used as storage areas by having workers move materials to and from work areas as needed. Part of the plan could include investing in extra bins and more frequent disposal. The costs of this investment could be offset by the elimination of over-handling.

Worker training is an essential part of any good housekeeping program. Workers need to know how to work safely with the products they use. They also need to know how to protect other workers, such as by posting signs and reporting any unusual conditions.

Housekeeping order is "maintained" not "achieved." This means removing the inevitable messes that occur from time to time and not waiting until the end of the shift to reorganize and clean up. Integrating housekeeping into jobs can help ensure this is done. A good housekeeping program identifies and assigns responsibilities for the following:

- day-to-day clean-up
- waste disposal
- removal of unused materials
- inspection to ensure clean-up is complete

The housekeeping program should also schedule adequate time during working hours for cleaning. Responsibilities should include out-of-the-way places such as shelves, basements, sheds, and boiler room which would otherwise be overlooked.

Maintaining housekeeping order also requires the orderly arrangement of operations, tools, equipment and supplies. A good housekeeping program plans tasks and activities which create or recreate these orderly arrangements.

The final addition to any housekeeping program is inspection. It is the only way to check for deficiencies in the program so that changes can be made. The checklist in Appendix A provides a general guide to workplace inspection.

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4. EFFECTIVE HOUSEKEEPING PROGRAM ELEMENTS

Including the following elements in a housekeeping program can help ensure its effectiveness.

Dust and Dirt Removal

In some jobs, enclosure and exhaust methods fail to collect dust, dirt and chips. Vacuum cleaners are suitable for removing light dust and dirt. Industrial models have special fittings for cleaning walls, ceilings, ledges, machinery, and other hard-to-reach places where dust and dirt may accumulate. Dampening floors or using sweeping compounds before sweeping reduces the amount of airborne dust. The dust and grime that collect in places like shelves, piping, conduits, light fixtures, reflectors, windows, cupboards and lockers may require manual cleaning. Special-purpose vacuums are useful for removing hazardous substances.

Employee Facilities

Employee facilities need to be adequate, clean and well maintained. Lockers are necessary for storing employees' personal belongings. Washroom facilities require cleaning once or more each shift. They also need to have a good supply of soap, towels and disinfectants. If workers are using hazardous materials, employee facilities should provide special precautions such as showers, washing facilities and change rooms. Smoking, eating or drinking in the work area should be prohibited where toxic materials are handled. The eating area should be separate from the work area and properly cleaned each shift.

Surfaces

Floors

Poor floor conditions are a leading cause of accidents so it is important to clean up spilled oil and other liquids at once. Allowing chips, shavings and dust to accumulate can also cause accidents. Trapping chips, shavings and dust before they reach the floor or cleaning them up regularly can prevent their accumulation. Areas that cannot be cleaned continuously, such as entrance ways, should have anti-slip flooring. Keeping floors in good order also means replacing worn or ripped flooring which poses a tripping hazard.

Walls

Light-coloured walls reflect light while dirty or dark-coloured walls absorb light. Contrasting colours warn of physical hazards and mark obstructions such as pillars. Paint can highlight railings, guards and other safety equipment, but should never be used as a substitute for guarding. The program should outline the regulations and standards for colours.

Maintain Light Fixtures

Cleaning and replacing light fixtures is an integral part of any housekeeping program. Dirty light fixtures reduce essential light levels. Clean light fixtures can improve lighting efficiency significantly.

Aisles and Stairways

Aisles should be wide enough to comfortably accommodate people and vehicles. Aisle space allows for the movement of people, products and materials. Warning signs and mirrors can improve sight-lines in blind corners. Arranging aisles properly encourages people to use them so that they do not take shortcuts through hazardous areas.

Keeping aisles and stairways clear is important. They should not be used for temporary "overflow" or "bottleneck" storage.

Stairways and aisles also require adequate lighting.

Spill Control

The best way to control spills is to stop them before they happen. Regularly cleaning and maintaining machines and equipment is one way. Another is to use drip pans and guards where possible spills might occur. When spills do occur, it is important to clean them up immediately. Absorbent materials are useful for wiping up greasy, oily or other liquid spills. Used absorbents must be disposed of properly and safely.

Tools and Equipment

Tool housekeeping is very important, whether in the tool room, on the rack, in the yard, or on the bench. Tools require suitable fixtures with marked locations to provide orderly arrangement, both in the tool room and near the work bench. Returning them promptly after use reduces the chance of their being misplaced or lost. Workplaces should regularly inspect, clean and repair all tools and take any damaged or worn tools out of service.

Maintenance

The maintenance of buildings and equipment may be the most important element of good housekeeping. Maintenance involves keeping buildings, equipment and machinery in safe, efficient working order and in good repair. This includes maintaining sanitary facilities and regularly painting and cleaning walls. Broken windows, damaged doors, defective plumbing and broken floor surfaces can make a workplace look neglected and cause accidents and affect work practice. So it is important to replace or fix broken or damaged items as quickly as possible. A good maintenance program provides for the inspection, maintenance, upkeep and repair of tools, equipment, machines and processes.

Waste Disposal

Regular collection, grading and sorting of scrap contributes to order. Allowing material to build up on the floor wastes time and energy into cleaning it up. Placing scrap containers conveniently where the waste is produced encourages orderly waste collection. All waste receptacles should be clearly labelled.

Storage

Order is essential in overcoming material storage problems, whether on a temporary or permanent basis. Minimizing handling, especially manual materials handling, reduces strain injuries.

Stacking cartons and drums on a firm foundation and cross tying where necessary reduces the chance of their movement. The storing of flammable, combustible, toxic and other hazardous materials in approved containers in designated areas should be done according to applicable fire, health and safety codes and regulations.

Materials should be ordered for delivery so that they are readily available in the sequence in which workers need them. The location of the stockpiles should not interfere with work but they should still be readily available when required. Stored materials should allow at least one metre of clear space under sprinkler heads.

Stored materials should not obstruct stairs, exits, fire equipment, emergency eyewash fountains, showers or first aid. All storage areas should be clearly marked.

5. CONCLUSION

Effective housekeeping is an important part of an occupational health and safety program. Proper planning and inspection ensures that housekeeping practices become a part of the day-to-day work. The following checklist and INFOGRAMs provide a good review of your workplace.

APPENDIX A

Housekeeping Inspection Checklist

Use the following checklist as a general workplace guide.

Floors and Other Areas

____ Are floors clean and clear of waste?
____ Are signs posted to warn of wet floors?
____ Are floors in good condition?
____ Are there holes, worn or loose planks or carpet sticking up?
____ Is anti-slip flooring used where spills, moisture or grease are likely?
____ Are there protruding objects such as nails, sharp corners, open cabinet drawers, trailing electrical wires?
____ Are personal items, such as clothing and lunch boxes, in assigned lockers or storage areas?
____ Is the work area congested?

Aisles and Stairways

____ Are aisles unobstructed and clearly marked?
____ Are mirrors installed at blind corners?
____ Are aisles wide enough to accommodate workers and equipment comfortably?
____ Are safe loading practices used with hand and power trucks, skids, or pallets?
____ Is the workplace lighting adequate? Are stairs well lit?
____ Are stairs covered with an anti-slip tread? Are faulty stair treads repaired?

Spill Control

____ Are all spills wiped up quickly?
____ Are procedures followed as indicated on the material safety data sheet?
____ Are spill absorbents used for greasy, oily, flammable or toxic materials?
____ Are used rags and absorbents disposed of promptly and safely?
____ Is a spill area surrounded by a barrier to prevent a spill from spreading?

Equipment and Machinery Maintenance

____ Is equipment damaged or outdated?
____ Are tools and machinery inspected regularly for wear or leaks?
____ Is equipment repaired promptly?
____ Are drip pans or absorbent materials used if leaks cannot be stopped at the source?
____ Is a machine that splashes oil fitted with a screen or splash guard?
____ Are machines and tools cleaned regularly?

Waste Disposal

____ Are waste containers located where the waste is produced?
____ Are waste containers emptied regularly?
____ Are toxic and flammable waste chemicals handled properly?

Storage

____ Are storage areas safe and accessible?
____ Is material stacked securely, blocked or interlocked if possible?
____ Are materials stored in areas that do not obstruct stairs, fire escapes, exits or firefighting equipment?
____ Are materials stored in areas that do not interfere with workers or the flow of materials?
____ Are bins or racks provided where material cannot be piled?
____ Are all storage areas clearly marked?
____ Do workers understand material storage and handling procedures?

Fire Prevention

____ Are combustible and flammable materials present only in th quantities needed for the job at hand?
____ Are combustible and flammable materials kept in safety cans during use?
____ Are hazardous materials stored in approved containers and away from ignition sources?
____ Are sprinkler heads clear of stored material?
____ Are fire extinguishers inspected and located along commonly travelled routes, and close to possible ignition sources?
____ Are oily or greasy rags placed in metal containers and disposed of regularly?

APPENDIX B

Workplace Housekeeping--Checklist

DOs

MINIMIZE fire hazards by keeping workplace free of accumulated combustible materials and waste.

ENSURE that exits and aisles are clear of obstructions to allow easy evacuation of the building.

PLACE all trash and scrap in proper containers.

KEEP oily rags in covered metal containers.

DISPOSE of hazardous materials in approved marked containers.

STORE equipment and materials in their assigned location.

CLEAN air vents and filters to maintain ventilation efficiency.

ENSURE that boxes, drums, and piles are located on a firm foundation and properly stacked.

CLEAN UP tools and unused materials after finishing a job or before leaving the job site.

CLEAN UP spills promptly according to procedures, using personal protective equipment (PPE) where necessary.

REPORT hazards such as uneven boards, cracks, burnt-out lights.

BUNDLE hoses and cables when not in use.

PLACE empty containers and pallets in designated locations.

DUMP small containers into larger ones.

KEEP only enough combustible materials at job site for job at hand.

DO NOTs

DO NOT PILE material around fire extinguishers or sprinklers.

DO NOT LEAVE clean-up to last few minutes of shift or day.

DO NOT CLEAN equipment without "locking out."

DO NOT REACH into waste containers. Dump contents or remove bag.

DO NOT BLOW off dust with compressed air. Use a vacuum or brush.

DO NOT COLLECT broken glass and metal straps in plastic bags.

DO NOT USE bare hands when collecting waste. Wear gloves to avoid cuts and splinters.

DO NOT PLACE materials on stairs.

DO NOT USE kegs or boxes as chairs or ladders.

Available for display as SAFETY INFOGRAM SB-01

APPENDIX C

Workplace Housekeeping--Construction

CHECKLIST

DOs

GATHER up and remove debris to keep the work site orderly.

PLAN for the adequate disposal of scrap, waste and surplus materials.

KEEP the work area and all equipment tidy. Designate areas for waste materials and provide containers.

KEEP stairways, passageways and gangways free of material, supplies and obstructions.

SECURE loose or light material that is stored on roofs or on open floors.

REMOVE or bend over nails protruding from lumber.

DO NOTs

DO NOT PERMIT rubbish to fall freely from any level of the project. Use chutes or other approved devices to lower materials.

DO NOT THROW tools or other materials.

DO NOT RAISE or lower any tool or equipment by its own cable or supply hose.

FLAMMABLE/EXPLOSIVE MATERIALS

STORE flammable or explosive materials such as gasoline, oil and cleaning agents apart from other materials.

KEEP flammable and explosive materials in proper containers with contents clearly marked.

STORE full barrels in an upright position.

KEEP gasoline and oil barrels on a barrel rack.

STORE empty barrels separately.

POST signs prohibiting smoking, open flames and other ignition sources in areas where flammable and explosive materials are stored.

STORE and chain all compressed gas cylinders in an upright position.

MARK empty cylinders with the letters "MT," and store them separately from full or partially full cylinders.

VENTILATE all storage areas properly.

ENSURE that all electric fixtures and switches are explosion-proof where flammable materials are stored.

USE grounding straps equipped with clamps on containers to prevent static electricity build-up.

Available for display as SAFETY INFOGRAM SB-02

APPENDIX D

Workplace Housekeeping--Stockpiling

LUMBER

LAY lumber before stacking on a solid level sill.

USE cross-piling or cross-stripping whenever the pile exceeds 1.2 metres (4 ft.) in height.

EXERCISE care when cutting bands used to bundle lumber. Avoid being trapped by falling materials.

REINFORCING STEEL

USE wooden spacers to separate piles of reinforcing steel.

UNLOAD reinforcing steel by mechanical means whenever possible.

CHECK all bundles for broken or weak tie wires before attempting to unload.

PIPE

STACK pipe on solid, level sills only. Block pipes to prevent them from rolling.

PLACE lagging between layers to reduce the pressure and prevent the pile from spreading.

REMOVE pipe from ends of the pile.

DO NOT STACK pipe higher than 1.5 metres (5 ft.).

STRUCTURAL STEEL

PILE structural steel to prevent tipping and slipping.

GIVE special attention when loading structural steel from trucks.

PLACE slings on steel before releasing binder chains.

BAGGED AND STACKED MATERIAL

MAiNTAIN stability.

DO NOT ALLOW piles to exceed ten bags in height unless the face of the piles are supported by the walls of a storage bin or enclosure.

CROSS-PILE bagged materials on skids and pile only to a convenient height. The height depends on the nature and ability of the mechanical aids used and the weight of the bagged materials.

BRICKS, BLOCKS, TILES

PILE bricks, blocks or tiles on a solid, level surface only.

USE extreme caution when removing metal bands.

DO NOT STOCKPILE material on a scaffold beyond the safe loading capacity.

Available for display as SAFETY INFOGRAM SB-03

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FURTHER READING

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